

PLAC LEGISLATIVE INTERNSHIP PROGRAMME

ALUMNI

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**PLAC LEGISLATIVE INTERNSHIP PROGRAMME
ALUMNI MAGAZINE**

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ABOUT THE LEGISLATIVE INTERNSHIP PROGRAMME (LIP)

PLAC's Legislative Internship Programme is an annual programme aimed at improving youth participation and engagement with the governance and legislative process, particularly by seeking to create a better understanding of democratic institutions such as the National Assembly.

The internship programme was instituted in 2013 originally with support from the Department for International Development (DFID) now known as Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO). It ran for 3 years, until 2015. It was reinstated in 2018 with funding support from the European Union (EU) and has continued annually since then. The EU has now supported 6 editions of the programme.

Over 250 young Nigerians have benefitted from this programme since its inception in 2013. The programme has been made possible not only with the support of PLAC's funders, but also, by the longstanding collaboration and support of the Nigerian National Assembly who have been receptive and provided support to the implementation over the programme years as a way of opening the parliament to youth participation and civic engagement.

While PLAC has been responsible for the recruitment, training and remuneration of the interns, the National Assembly management


has assisted in the deployment of the interns to legislative committees and in providing interns with a workspace under the supervision of a Committee Clerk, to facilitate their learning and make their stay at the National Assembly worthwhile.

LIP Alumni

In 2022 PLAC organised the first Alumni network convening to bring together, past and current interns with the aim of fostering a strong networking platform, following up on interns' progress and tracking the long-term impact of the internship programme. It took place on 23rd November 2022 at the Transcorp Hilton Hotel Abuja.

This event, which was hybrid, saw 100 past interns (60 physical and 40 virtual) participate in the meeting. Conversations were held on how the internship contributed to the personal, professional, career growth and development of participants. Interns shared how the internship helped their career progression and built useful skills they deployed in their professional journey. There was also a panel discussion on "Using the Legislative Internship to Create Synergy for Strategic National Development."

An accompanying Alumni Magazine was published with personal updates and reflections by past Interns who shared the



impact of the internship, as well as information on career transitions, professional or leadership achievements, publications, volunteer work, and advice for prospective legislative interns. Going forward, PLAC will continue to seek to provide the LIP alumni with a medium to stay connected and would welcome more contributions from its alumni in subsequent editions. The Alumni magazine is expected to be a forum to share career updates, ideas, reflections about the internship, as well as governance issues in Nigeria.

The first edition of the Alumni Magazine is available on PLAC website via this link: <https://placng.org/i/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/PLAC-Legislative-Internship-Programme-LIP-Alumni-Magazine.pdf>

Video highlight of the Alumni convening can be found via this link: <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=902353464523636>

SUCCESS STORIES

FROM INTERN TO INSPIRED ADVOCATE:

My PLAC Legislative Internship Success Story



Mukhtar Umar Bagarawa

2022 Cohort
Representative

In just a few months as a PLAC legislative intern, my entire outlook on public service underwent a profound transformation. What began as a learning opportunity turned into a catalyst for my passion in legislative affairs.

During my internship at PLAC, I dove headfirst into the intricacies of legislative processes. From drafting bills to attending committee meetings, every task presented a chance to grasp the inner workings of policymaking. What surprised me most was not just the complexity, but the direct impact these decisions had on people's lives.

As I navigated the corridors of power and witnessed the tireless efforts of legislators, my mindset shifted. I started to see the immense potential for positive change through legislative action. The experience was a wake-up call, urging me to be part of a system that shapes the future.

This internship was more than a stint on my resume; it was a revelation. It ignited a fire within me, propelling my interest in pursuing a legislative position. The exposure to the dynamic world of politics, combined with the genuine desire to make a difference, fueled my determination.

Today, I stand not just as a former PLAC legislative intern but as an inspired advocate ready to contribute to the betterment of society. The lessons learned, relationships built, and the challenges overcome have equipped me with the tools to pursue a meaningful career in legislative service.

The PLAC legislative internship was not just an experience; it was a stepping stone that set the course for my future. As I reflect on this journey, I am grateful for the mindset shift it triggered, propelling me toward a path where my passion aligns with purpose, and success is measured by the positive impact I can make in the legislative arena.

Mukhtar is currently a lecturer at the Ummaru Ali Shinkafi Polytechnic, Sokoto and the Executive Director, Saving the Almajiri Initiative (SACI)



Sadiq Muritala Adewale 2022 Cohort

There is a popular saying that “Choosing a profession is choosing a life, getting the right training in the same profession is building a lifetime”. Before I get selected for the 2022 PLAC Legislative Internship Program, I have volunteered in some few State Houses of Assembly based on my background in Political Science and most importantly, my genuine interest in the legislature. Hence, my roles then as a volunteer/ intern offered me the platform to gain practical insight of legislative practices and processes as a supplement to my theoretical knowledge in Political Science.

Having said that, one of the major highlights of my accomplishments during my Legislative Internship Programme with PLAC at the National Assembly was the genuine interest and mentorship I received from some of our resource persons, who despite their busy schedule, found a special interest in grooming my knowledge further on Bill Drafting, Bill Analysis, Budget Review and other Legislative Procedures.

In consequence, my learning sojourn at PLAC and the National Assembly paid off and afford me the opportunity to be employed as a Research Assistant, Office of the Special Adviser to the Hon. Speaker of the House on Policy, Research and Strategy, few months after my internship.

Indeed, my journey through the PLAC Legislative Internship Programme has remarkably shaped and influenced my career path positively.

Sadiq Muritala Adewale currently works as a Research Assistant to the Special Adviser to the Speaker on Policy, Research and Strategy



Abiye Alambo Briggs 2022 Cohort

Exactly one year ago, I stood in the shoes of a legislative intern, but today appointed Legislative Aide (LA1) to my Distinguished Senator Dr. Ipalibo Banigo (DSSRS), the Chairman of the Senate Committee on Health of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, a trailblazer as the 1st female and Former Deputy Governor of Rivers State.

My role is multifaceted and pivotal to the effective functioning of the office of my Senator which encompasses extensive policy research, legislative drafting, constituency engagements, committee support, and oversight, her public relations, and other essential administrative assignments and tasks; thanks to the Legislative Internship Program of PLAC, with support from the European Union in Nigeria.

On the other hand, I am the founder and co-director of Geared for Youth Empowerment and Advocacy (GYEA). I am thankful to PLAC for this opportunity which has been significant to my personal and professional growth and advancement within a short time. For more information about what I do in the Civil Society space as an organization, kindly visit us at www.gyeeafrica.org.

Abiye Alambo Briggs is currently a Legislative Aide to the Chairman, Senate Committee on Health, and Founder and Co-director Geared for Youth Empowerment and Advocacy (GYEA)



A Reshaped Perspective

Paul Owoyemi, Chief Whip, MLA, 2022 Cohort

Learning, they say, is the progressive discovery of one's ignorance. Prior to coming to the Legislative Internship Program, I had been a staff of a civil society organization, Change for Africa Foundation, for an uninterrupted period of five years. Our primary concern as an organization revolves around election activities, promotion of good governance, and deepening of democracy in Nigeria. We have programs for pre-election, election and post-election, among others. In a reasonable way, as an individual and a member of a team of enthusiasts, working within an organization, I felt contented with our activities just revolving around the electorates, electoral bodies, and other stakeholders within the political space.

I was used to seeing election matters and governance just through the prism of the people, which is, sometimes heavily laced with emotions and biases, and never through lens of the political office holders, particularly, the legislators.

However, the internship program did not only expose me to a fair and balanced way of political reasoning, more importantly, it gave me a firsthand experience of how the legislature works. I was actively involved in committee activities. I learnt new ways of doing things. It was quite revealing to see how demanding the duties of legislators are.

In each bi-weekly lecture, I kept seeing new ideas and ways to improve on what I do for myself and my organization.

And the lessons I learnt, properly internalized, have been rewarding.

The aggregate of those experiences was equally brought to bear in a social impact academy training I recently had, where I led my team in various group activities, mostly relating to legislative affairs. At the end of the training, the organizers and my co-learners had this to say about me ' Paul came with a whole of experience to share, one would wonder if he had been a legislator'.

I have never been one, hopefully soon. But PLAC gave me the opportunity to understand what legislative practices are, and how different they are from the perception of the people. In all, my perspectives have been reshaped, the scope of my work enlarged. All thanks to the opportunity PLAC provided.

Paul Owoyemi currently works as a Junior Consultant, Digital and Electronic Banking Committee, House of Representatives, National Assembly



Khalifa Nasir 2022 Cohort

Prior to PLAC days, I have always been curious about finding answers to so many unfortunate events in our governance arrangement and I was lucky to find an interesting internship that will put me in a closet with law and policy makers in the country. My participation in PLAC's legislative internship program (LIP) became a defining point in my legal journey as I discovered my true passion and genuine interest in parliamentary service.

2023 came with a blessing as I secured appointment with the Zamfara State House of Assembly as an Asst Director, Legal Department. This appointment is a step forward to displaying my interest in legislative sector. In furtherance of my commitment to better myself in this sector, I recently got selected by National Institute for Legislative and Democratic Studies (NILDS) to undergo internship training on legislative drafting soon. I am proud to say every of my accomplishments in the legislative sector is tied to PLAC because it gave me the platform to identify my genuine passion as an early career professional. Thank you PLAC and your management for adding value to my career.

Khalifa Nasir currently works as a Legislative Draftsman, Zamfara State House of Assembly



Bold Steps: A Journey of Transformation

Jennifer Ifunanya Eziuloh 2022 Cohort

They say a journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step, but I'll rephrase that to say a journey of a thousand miles starts with a bold step. Yes, a bold step, because that's exactly what has brought me this far. In just nine months, a profound transformation in my career journey was made possible by that step—an attempt that led to a life-changing opportunity and impact.

I vividly remember viewing my cousin's WhatsApp status when something caught my attention. It was the Policy and Legal Advocacy Centre (PLAC) announcing a 10-week full-time internship program supported by the European Union (EU-SDGN) for young Nigerians to gain knowledge of legislative practices and processes. At first, I thought to myself, I don't like politics, and I definitely don't know much about it either, but then I decided to give it a shot and see what this program had to offer.

I submitted my application and was called in for an interview. After a rigorous selection process, I was chosen to represent my state during the program. Whoa! Can you believe that? Well, that's when it all began. The 2022 Legislative Internship Program was power-packed. Surrounded by bright minds from all corners of Nigeria, felt exhilarating. My colleagues exuded intelligence and brilliance, leaving me awestruck. The bi-weekly programs, featuring interactive lectures with influential figures in Nigeria, were enlightening. At some point, I could tell this was well put together. My time at the National Assembly, observing plenary sessions and working closely with the Senate Committee on Communications, was mind-blowing. Oh, what a journey from that bold step. It was a long, enjoyable, fascinating, and insightful 10-week program that concluded beautifully, and I sure didn't want it to end. But as they say, when one chapter closes, another opens.

Right after the program, PLAC, actively involved in promoting transparent and credible electoral processes, reached out again. It was almost like a wish come true. They invited two of my internship colleagues and me to serve as support team members of the Nigeria Civil Society Situation Room during the 2023 elections. Throughout the experience, I came to understand that a great deal of work is being done in Nigeria by various CSOs, NGOs, individuals, and volunteers.

Today, my career journey and perspective have been redefined by this experience, leaving me with a constant urge to contribute more to my dear country. I would like to express my appreciation to PLAC and the EU for providing young Nigerians like myself this opportunity to become more and better informed.

Jennifer currently works as an Advocacy, Communication and Campaign Manager at The Wellbeing Foundation Africa

Passingthrough...

Kosisochukwu Ifunanya Umeh 2022 Cohort



What qualifies as a perfect success story? The one you order frantically like a mother guarding a child from making a mistake? Or the one you wade through, committing yourself to learning amidst the boisterous tides that come with life? Going back to read my final report to PLAC made me realize how much of a success story it was. Since it documented every experience – from negative to positive – it told the perfect success story; I will be drawing from that report in this short story.

Having completed my NYSC programme in 2022 and joining an organisation which I had volunteered with as an undergraduate, I was still trying to figure out what direction I was headed. However, I was sure of one thing – there is a cause for good governance in Nigeria, and I wanted to play a part. When the opportunity came to apply for the Legislative Internship Programme, “good governance” was a phrase that called forth something inside of me, but this came at a price.

The 10-week-long internship was not a glide over as each phase came with its challenges. However, every Bi-weekly session allowed us to refuel through theoretical learning to be tested and applied at the National Assembly. The internship further strengthened my capacity to work in a team as I had the privilege to meet and interact with about 35 other vibrant interns from all the states of the federation who were grounded in their various fields.

The Legislative Internship Programme was both an eye-opener and a major defining moment in my career for two reasons. It attracted recommendations that provided more opportunities to work on issues of governance that are major areas of interest, and in a moment, a role in a highly-placed organisation.

In the last year of experiential growth, I am more confident in the treasure of learning rather than always wanting to be at the helm of things. I have also found an uncommon treasure in putting no confidence in one's intellect, abilities and achievements because, like vapour, they soon vanish. Hence, a need to fix one's eyes on that which is unseen. This internship was a leap of faith. Looking back, I am grateful to have taken that leap, however fearful.

Thank you, PLAC for an initiative that gives the youth wings to fly.

Thank you, European Union, for funding this cause in commitment to Nigeria's development.



Eniola Omolola Bisiriyu 2022 Cohort

After two (2) failed attempts, my third attempt got me into the Policy and Legal Advocacy Centre (PLAC) Legislative Internship Programme (LIP), her reputation precedes her, which is the reason I kept trying. I had a conviction that there was something PLAC gives that I had to experience.

My experience at PLAC LIP is invaluable and I consider it a great privilege as it came with the opportunity to interact with people from different parts of the country.

It is pertinent to also mention my practical exposure and interaction with the National Assembly, which has helped me in my field of Legislative Drafting. The bi-weekly sessions are one of my most cherished experiences at PLAC because I learned a lot from the notable guest speakers. Let me also emphasise that it was a time for me to unlearn, learn and re-learn several things.

During my LIP at PLAC, I contested an election for the position of Deputy Speaker at the Model Legislative Assembly (MLA). The win is a testament to the support of the members of my cohort; I am grateful for every one of you and this goes to the intentionality of PLAC in picking her interns. I also had the opportunity to share my testimony with the 2023 cohort.

PLAC LIP surpassed my expectations and it remains a point of reference for some of my growth and achievements.

A big thank you to PLAC and the European Union Support Democratic Governance in Nigeria (EU SDGN) for this lifetime opportunity.

Eniola currently works as Legislative Aide to the Chairman House Committee on Digital and Electronic Banking

TESTIMONIALS

My Internship Experience.





For me, despite currently undergoing my Masters programme in Legislative drafting yet this experience is unique, having to go to the National Assembly for 8 weeks, understanding the concepts, attending plenary, speaking to my legislators, all these experiences is what I won't be able to learn in the classroom. I am grateful to PLAC for this opportunity and I say a big thank you to the European Union for supporting this project.

**ENIOLA OMOLOLA BISIRIYU
- LAGOS STATE**



I am super excited to have been part of those that participated in the 2022 PLAC Internship Programme. I have learnt a whole lot. Prior to this time, I thought legislators were people that were there to spend money alone. This internship has left me with a new orientation that legislators perform different functions such as law making, representation and oversight functions.

**GIFT OGBUJA OKECHUKWU,
- IMO STATE**



Thank you to PLAC, thank you to the European Union for funding this great initiative. I can confidently say that I am now better informed on the Legislative processes that goes on in the National Assembly. I consider myself privileged to be part of this programme. This programme has helped me reshape my ideas about the National Assembly. Prior to now, I had zero to no knowledge about what goes on in the National Assembly, how bills and motions are drafted, but right now I can say that I am leaving this programme with better information to be a good steward of public policy.

Thank you.

**LUBABATU ABUBAKAR
-KADUNA STATE**

TESTIMONIALS
My Internship Experience.

TESTIMONIALS

My Internship Experience.



I have been on the PLAC- EU Internship programme for the past 10 weeks. I will really say that this has been the biggest exposure of my life. I was posted to the House Committee on Defense and I had the privilege to see how budget Defence is done and how members perform their oversight duties. Really, I have learnt so much about legislation. I really want to say a big thank you to PLAC and the European Union for this opportunity.

**AKINLADE AKINYEMI ISAAC
- OSUN STATE**



I am glad to be part of this programme. It's really been a very wonderful time. I came in into the programme with high expectations, but I was able to surpass my expectations. I also got to know and learn about the legislature. All my ignorance and misconceptions have been erased. I am grateful to PLAC and the European Union for this opportunity.

**PAUL OLUWADAMILOLA OWOYEMI
- ONDO STATE**



My experience in the PLAC Internship Programme has been a very amazing one. I have learnt a lot from working in the National Assembly. It's a dream come true for me. I thank PLAC and the European Union for making this dream come true. I hope that PLAC and the European Union will continue the programme for the benefit of other youths in Nigeria.

**HABIBA ADAMU GULMA
- KEBBI STATE**



During my time as an intern, I was privileged to be around Nigerians who believe in Nigeria and are willing to make sacrifices for the country. I was also around law makers and bureaucrats who are part of the system. All these people taught me a lot. Its indeed been an eyeopener for me. I thank the European Union for supporting PLAC on this project, I also thank PLAC for providing me with this very privileged opportunity.

**BINKAM GALADIMMA
- PLATEAU STATE**



My experience in this internship has been a very worthwhile and impactful one. Being a legislative enthusiast, this internship has helped me to horn my skills in the area of legislative practices and engagements. It is also worthy of note that after the training, i was able to come up with a legislative bill for the implementation of the Ogun state youth parliament. I thank PLAC for this great opportunity.

**SADIQ MURTALA ADEWALE
- OGUN STATE**



The internship for me was quite revealing. I have learnt a lot about legislative practices and processes. Also, the Bi-weekly meeting that featured seasoned resource persons. I want to thank PLAC for creating this opportunity and the European Union for funding this project.

**MUKHTAR UMAR BAGARAWA
- SOKOTO STATE**

TESTIMONIALS

My Internship Experience.

ARTICLES FROM PAST ALUMNI



24 YEARS OF RETURN TO CIVILIAN RULE IN NIGERIA: ANOTHER ERA OF TURBULENCE AND DESPAIR?

By Abubakar Ahmed

Head of English/Head of Administration, Albarka Radio 97.5 Bauchi

Colonial Britain was forced to grant political independence to Nigeria on the 1st of October 1960, just as it did to most of her colonies across the globe, either a bit earlier than Nigeria, or a bit later. This was actually triggered by India since 1948 and Pakistan, which was created out of vengeance by the subdued British to spite and put India on a permanent political misery; and this served as an eye opener to other colonial hubs elsewhere. Nigeria welcomed the new development as a foundation stone to its greatness engineered by self - determination. Indeed, the first five years of independence saw Nigeria building confidence across the diplomatic scene, including joining the United Nations on October 7th of the same year as 99th Member and the country also created a solid foundation for growth and development, guided by well - articulated development plans and generally making the necessary attempt to create a united country.

However, the efforts of nation building, as bitter and challenging as it were, was not appreciated by some segments of the society who assumed the country Nigeria was not to be built under a democracy which is premised upon a popular choice, but the country must be built based on supremacy of some interests over others. A segment of the Nigerian Army with similar conception saw the obvious crack in the polity and struck. The first attempt to truncate democracy in

Nigeria succeeded in January 1966 and placed a permanent seed of discord, hatred, conflict and distrust among our politicians. Since then, up to the year 1999, the military became a cankerworm in our political firmament.

It is necessary to reflect on these historical facts because they form some of the challenging problems that we have been unable to overcome as a nation. It was amidst this fundamental drawback that the military outplayed itself severally and could not be spared locally and internationally for its obviously bad handling of the Nigerian state - worse than the politicians the first coup plotters accused of mishandling the nation. The military itself voluntarily handed over power to the politicians in 1999 and pledged since then to subdue itself to civilian authority. They have kept to that commitment for 24 years now, but then, the question remains whether the politicians have proved themselves better.

The death of General Sani Abacha, the then Military Head of State who upheld the decision of General Babangida's regime to deny the ongoing process of producing democratically elected leadership in the country paved way for the ascension of an apolitical Military leader, General Abdulsalami Abubakar who instituted a 9 - month transition period to produce a popularly elected leadership for Nigeria.

The newly elected President, Chief Olusegun Obasanjo promised to change Nigeria for the better. He assured Nigerians that he would transform the power sector to create the enabling environment for industrialization of the economy. He also promised to build a viable political culture. Nigerians irrespective of their inclinations believed

him. President Olusegun Obasanjo led Nigeria under a very supportive democracy from the people for eight straight years. However, after two terms in office, he left a Nigeria that grappled with challenges such as poverty and an almost static industrial growth.

In terms of political culture, the eight-year rule of President Olusegun Obasanjo witnessed gradual retrogressive political manipulations where massive mysterious and high-profile political killings were recorded in which to date; some of them are not resolved. These included the mysterious deaths of Chief Bola Ige (former Minister of Justice), Chief Harry Marshall (Rivers State politician) and Dr. Chuba Okadigbo (former President of the Senate). The worst legacy bequeathed, however, was the attempt to tamper with Nigeria's Constitution to allow him (President Olusegun Obasanjo) continue in office after the expiration of his second term, an attempt that was thwarted by patriots.

Despite the massive disappointments, the leadership of President Olusegun Obasanjo recorded some positive developments such as improvement in the quality of the public service in terms of improved welfare, general growth in the economy which created the largest and biggest market in Africa and positioned Nigeria as the largest economy on the African Continent as well as noticeable in the tertiary health sector following the improvement and upgrading of government owned tertiary healthcare facilities in each of the six geo - political zones in the country.

Between 2007 and 2015, however, Alhaji Umaru Musa Yar'adua and Dr. Goodluck Jonathan led the country with the first spending only two years where the second served as his vice. The Yar'adua

administration sought to effect some semblance of improvement in what it was bequeathed by the last administration; including a promise to correct the blatant abuse of political power in succession process which Yar'adua himself, faulted. Realizing the flaws in the election that brought him into office, he constituted an electoral reform committee spearheaded by the former Chief Justice of Nigeria, Muhammadu Uwais with membership composing of a highly intellectual and erudite class including the best brains from the academia, Civil Society Organizations, professional groups and the public service. He reduced the price of Premium Motor Spirit (petrol) to ease the hardship of Nigerians, sought better international cooperation for economic growth, made attempts at addressing the power problems of the country and openly fought against impunity. His major misstep was triggering an internal strife by violently attempting to crush a puritanical religious sect, popularly known as Boko Haram, an action that we are still paying for.

As for his successor, Goodluck Jonathan, many political observers excused his shortcomings because he came to power unprepared as a result of Yar'adua's death. His administration performed abysmally low as well despite the enormous income the country generated from oil sales between the years 2009 to 2013 before the economic recession. His administration however, made efforts to improve power supply, and generally maintain the smooth running of government. The worst record of his administration was the gradual and systematic growth of terrorism where the Boko Haram sect was allowed to develop into one of the world's deadliest terrorist organizations, a battle the country is still entangled with. This was attributed as one of the major factors responsible

for his failure to secure another term in office thereby ending his term in office on May 29, 2015.

Following a merger of the strongest opposition parties in the country sometime in 2014, the All Progressives Congress (APC) was born. They defeated the ruling Party, Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) in the 2015 elections. The new leadership, under President Muhammadu Buhari promised Nigerians a change. Given his tough military background, the public had confidence in him and hopes were high that we will confront Nigeria's biggest problems. Indeed, when he came into power on May 29, 2015, most Nigerians thought the problems of the country and Nigerians have finally come to an end. He worked hard to suppress the activities of the notorious Boko Haram sect and ISWAP terrorist groups. He implemented bold policies to deal especially with grand corruption such as the implementation of Treasury Single Account where government resources are warehoused under a unit of control. He also ensured that employees of the Federal Government are migrated into the Integrated Personnel Payroll and Information System, IPPIS in an effort to eliminate ghost workers and save the country billions of Naira which would have been otherwise siphoned. His administration also introduced the most ambitious social investment programme in the history of the continent, and as well, as embarked on ambitious developmental projects. Notably in this drive is the huge investment in the railway sector. He increased the country's foreign reserves as well as helped the economy to get out of recession twice in the year 2016 and 2020.

However, the administration of Muhammadu

Buhari began to slip in public confidence with the rise in banditry, kidnapping and terrorism. Farmers/herders clashes found a new pulse across the Northern part of the country, especially the North-Central and in some southern parts of the country. A rise in banditry, kidnappings and cattle rustling bedeviled the North-Western States of the country. The fight against corruption was seen by Nigerians to be slowing down even with successes being recorded by anti-graft agencies in the country and there was general outcry across the land. Nigerians blamed the President for allowing his Service Chiefs to overstay their welcome, a charge he chose to ignore. In spite of these outcries, unlike his predecessor, he won a second term. As he wound down his second term, the security situation in the country was worsening. The issue of secessionists' agitation became more pronounced and tolling on the nation's fragile unity and integration. His economic policies took a rapid nose-dive while the Covid-19 pandemic also partly plunged the country into another economic recession.

Unfortunately, the 24 years of the return of civilian rule in Nigeria has been a chaotic period for the country where all the hopes and aspirations of Nigerians have not been met in the political, economic, or the social spheres. To many pundits, the period has been that of turbulence and despair. The Nigerian power sector has not seen

an appreciable change, neither has the industrial sector. Infrastructure such as roads, railways, airways, hospitals, schools etc., have witnessed significant changes but not to the satisfaction of the generality of Nigerians. Grand corruption in public places still seems to be the order of the day. Worst of all, the poor have not been bailed out of poverty. According to Nigeria's National Bureau of Statistics, over 133.3 million have slumped into multi-dimensional poverty; despite series of elections supposedly meant to bring in leadership to improve the lots of the people. The unemployment level in the country is one of the highest in sub-Saharan Africa.

Nobody knows if the country Nigeria can get it right in the near future, or if it is simply jinxed. Still, Nigerians are optimistic that all the travails the country is currently grappling with will be a thing of the past and that the Country Nigeria shall one day stand tall with pride in the comity of nations.



A RETHINK ON THE PLIGHT OF THE JUDICIAL ARM OF GOVERNMENT IN NIGERIA ON RESOURCE CONTROL.

By Khalifa Nasir Esq

Legislative Draftsman, Zamfara State House of Assembly

INTRODUCTION

The Judiciary is the institution that checks the excesses of other branches of government in a working system to reflect the tenets of democracy. Section 6 of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (CFRN) 1999 (as amended) vests the judicial powers of the country in the courts. This article discusses the condition of the Nigerian judiciary in the perspective of financial independence how it is important to the integrity of the judicial arm.

FINANCIAL AUTONOMY OF THE JUDICIARY

The 4th Republic Constitution established for the Federation a system of judiciary with substantial financial independence. It is opined by notable luminaries that such independence is aimed at ensuring that the judiciary upholds the rule of law and ensures supremacy of the constitution. Judicial autonomy is provided for under section 81 of the 1999 Constitution to shield the judiciary from undue influence of political stakeholders in the country. The judiciary, in advanced climes, often exercise such inherent powers prescribed by their governing instrument i.e., Constitution without undue influence or control from other branches of government.

Since the inception of the Fourth Republic in Nigeria, the judicial arm of government has faced challenges such as inefficiency, lack of adequate funding, poor judicial staff training, poor working environment etc. Lack of proper funding of the judiciary has often resulted in compromise and corruption in the judicial system. Most of their budget is also often controlled by the executive, as is seen in many States where Governors implement capital projects for the Judiciary and ultimately control their funds. From 1999 to date, several judicial officers have faced sanctions by the National Judicial Council for misconduct, including accepting bribes. This is arguably necessitated by poor conditions of service, lack of proper welfare packages and unfavourable working environments for judicial officers. This has set the judiciary on an unsustainable trajectory with no hope of overcoming these shortcomings.

In 2020, President Muhammadu Buhari signed Executive Order No.10 to bolster a 2018 constitutional amendment granting financial autonomy to the Judiciary across the 36 States of the country. The Order mandated the Accountant-General of the Federation to deduct from source, the amount due to State judiciaries from the monthly allocation of each State. In a bid ensure compliance, a Presidential Implementation Committee was constituted pursuant to the relevant provisions of the constitution. This was however short lived, as a lawsuit challenging the validity of the Order was instituted by the Attorney-Generals of all 36 States of the Federation. The Supreme Court ruled that the President acted ultra vires his powers by issuing Executive Order

No. 10 and that it was invalid and inconsistent with the Constitution.

Following this decision, it was clear that there was need to continue efforts to fully emancipate the Judiciary and go back to the drawing board taking the following into consideration:

- Need for a further constitutional amendment to enhance independence of the judiciary.
- Ensuring the executive arm of government ensures full release of budgetary allocation due to the Judiciary.
- Establishment of States Judicial Council to allow State Judiciaries access their finances without the intervention of National Judicial Council.
- Promoting public scrutiny of budgetary allocations to the Nigerian judiciary.

Recently, such effort yielded fruit with further amendments to the Constitution passed by the National Assembly in 2022 and now signed by the President that not only mandates financial autonomy for the Judiciary but also provides an implementation procedure such as a disbursement committee in each State to facilitate receipt of funds appropriated to the State Judiciaries. With the judiciary fully in control of their budget, it is expected that it will be better placed to check the other branches of government to deeply enshrine the rule of law and reflect the tenets of democracy.



BUILDING A STRONG CIVIC IDENTITY AMONG NIGERIAN YOUTHS AND STUDENTS: THE STUDENTS ELECTORAL VOICE!

By Abiye Alambo Briggs

Legislative Aide to the Chairman, Senate Committee on Health, 10th National Assembly

As a means of creating awareness of the power of voting as a constitutional right and encouraging eligible Nigerians to vote, Campus Civic Summit Nigeria "The Students Electoral Voice!" by PVC Activism – is a youth-led initiative reducing youth voter apathy, voter suppression, and the disenfranchisement of Nigerian students.

It is our objective to deepen the participation of the student body in civic and political affairs for the immediate and long-term impact it has in our communities and the society at large, independent of the Student Union Governments in Nigeria.

Engineering civically engaged campus communities to foster the responsible civic engagement of Nigeria's youngest members of democracy, most especially first-time voters within our tertiary institutions and colleges is our mission.

Our activism in civic participation and engagement with the student body sees the need to decentralize the ongoing civic and political conversations which barely involves campus students when it ought to.

We believe that our higher institutions already have the enabling environment that allows for the understanding of our democratic form of government, politics, and civic participation to foster peer learning among fellow youths and students wherein they develop a strong sense of civic identity with a deeper commitment and the motivation needed for responsible engagement on their own.

For this reason, we found it imperative to understand the voting pattern and behavior of young persons of voting age (undergraduate students) in our tertiary institutions and colleges as a focus group as we seek to improve the future engagement of youths and students in the electoral process and how they participate.

Going down memory lane, it will be recalled from our history books that in the 1960s, 1970s and the early 1980s, that our university campuses, as well as some secondary school grounds were very politically charged with a lot of political education and activities happening in those spaces.

This was solely because of the presence of a very active unionism practice that sieved into these particular spaces ensuring there was a decentralization of efforts in the civil society in Nigeria at that particular time.

Unfortunately, this is no longer the case in our time, and even if it was, it isn't widely spread. We would need to be intentional about ensuring that we carry the youths and the student body in Nigeria on board to understand, preserve and extend our democratic form of governance which is only 23 years since 1999. The easiest way of doing this will be through our tertiary institutions.

In conclusion, civic participation in our democratic form of governance also means demanding accountability and transparency from elected leaders. It takes the form of speaking up against social injustices, human rights and the abuse of power, and our students and youths have been well known to be active and passionate about this. We should trust them and also be intentional about being there to guide them in the process and model to engage.

As the originator and founder of the platform "The Students Electoral Voice", getting our youths and students to understand our democratic form of governance, political education and civic participation is at the core of our advocacy.

We believe students who are civically minded when they are much younger vote and will continue to vote for a better future. They will evangelize the need for active participation among their peers, family members and relatives, and will also discourage vote buying, and every sponsorship to engage unethically or cause violence before, during and after our elections.

Visit us for more information at:
www.campuscivicsummit.ng/priorities



TRENDS, PATTERNS AND DRIVERS OF THE JAPA PANDEMIC: ARE THESE DOORS INDEED MADE OF GOLD?

By Paul Owoyemi

Junior Consultant- House Committee on Digital and Electronic Banking, 10th, National Assembly

Undoubtedly, Migration itself is as old as man. It is the driver of globalization that has become part of human existence. People have been moving around the world, from point A to B, from time immemorial. These movements, in ancient times were usually informed by a number of factors, these are not limited to war, persecution, unfavorable weather and environmental conditions, and perhaps, more importantly, for food, both for man and his animals.

Today, these factors, combining in different permutations, are still very much prevalent; what however has recently been a matter of serious concern is the rate, dimension, the age group of people migrating, and more worryingly, the sacrifice they are willing to make just to move, with the devastating effects of these movements on the outbound regions; which are basically best explained by brain and resources drain.

Not long ago, the word 'japa' found its way into our everyday lexicon. Japa is a Yoruba slang which could mean different things from flee, run, bolt, take off, etc. in all, it simply means an escape from a danger or potential danger, and it is mostly used in the context of the mass exodus of Nigerians to other countries. Young, strong and able bodied men and women 'escaping the problems' of Nigeria.

Today, more than ever before, young Nigerians are fast losing hope in Nigeria,

they tend to believe that nothing good can come out of our Nazareth. Hence, they are ready to give all it takes, risk it all, in order to seek greener pastures elsewhere. They blame everything on economic hardship, insecurity and other pockets of vices bedeviling the present day Nigeria. They have a notion that once they step out of the shores of Nigeria their problems suddenly become things of the past. What however they do not understand is that each of us, according to Mr. Ban Ki-Moon (former United Nations Secretary General), holds a piece of the migration puzzle but none has the whole picture. They do not know in full what lies where they are headed.

This Japa syndrome, among other things, has been further premised by the series of attractions and advertisement reaching our youths. The outside world sends to us promises of hope, better life, balanced future, safety and economic freedom. They figuratively paint the golden side of the story, as captured in Emma Lazarus' poem, (the new colossus, 1883) "Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free, the wretched refuse of your teeming shore. Send these, the homeless, tempest-tossed to me, I lift my lamp beside the golden door!" But are these doors indeed made of gold? The answer is NO. On the contrary, a number of these young Nigerians when they get abroad find themselves in the 3 Ds – dirty, degrading, and dangerous jobs, just to keep body and soul together.

Recent Statistics has shown that about 46% of Nigerians, between the ages of 23 - 45 have plans or are willing to relocate to other countries. In a report by the UK Immigration Office, only Indians surpassed Nigerians in the number of visas granted to skilled workers in 2022. Statistics from the Nigerian Medical Association has it that within the last seven years, over 10, 000 Nigeria trained doctors have left the country for the UK, making Nigerians doctors the third largest nationality in the UK. The National Association of Nigeria Nurses and Midwives (NANNM) reported that about 11,000 Nigeria

trained nurses migrated to other countries between 2019 and 2022. This is just an account of skilled workers in a particular profession, when taken holistically, considering the generality of Nigerian moving out, the results are scary.

As horrifying as this situation is, there is however another side to it that is taking a very dangerous dimension - irregular migration.

In his classic book, "From frying pan to fire; how Africans migrants risk everything in their futile search for a better life in Europe", Olusegun Adeniyi detailed the gory and gruesome irregular movement of how young Africans brave the Sahara desert on foot, and how those who survive the ravages of the desert risk being sold in slave markets in Libya, or risk journeys across the Mediterranean sea on rickety boats, all in the forlorn hope of a better life in Europe, and countries where they are obviously not welcome.

Sadly, Nigerians top the list of these irregular migrants. As worrisome as this ugly phenomenon is, many have argued that it is in fact a prodrome, that is, an early symptom of an impending danger, and not necessarily the acute stage of a problem as the other set opined. The former group are of the opinion that the consequences of this mass exodus of our best hands await us in the future and might even come upon us sooner than is predicted. While the latter are of the belief that we are presently being consumed by the seemingly little fire we refused to quench. Whichever way we choose to look at it, we cannot take away 'consequences', and 'raging fire' from the equation. We are left with hope and wishes, hope that it won't get worse, and wishes that the solution gets to us sooner.

Until we begin to paint the whole picture for ourselves, saying things the way they truly are, and critically taking measures to curb the menace, the future is quite uncertain. To find a lasting solution to this menace, we need to first look at the causes of the problems, which

are deeply embedded in economic crisis, insecurity, defective educational system, lack of job opportunities, etc. – these are the push factors. Again, aggressive campaigns need to begin now to properly inform Nigerians that the grass that tends to be greener on the other side might be unrealistic.

Government at all levels need to wake up to their responsibilities, by creating an atmosphere where all the listed problems are reduced to the barest minimum. Religious and traditional leaders should join forces and voices together to instill and rekindle the right spirit in the minds of their followers. Making them realize that we all are stakeholders in the Nigeria project.

Furthermore, our educational institutions need to put importance on practical skills. Programs like the NYSC can be rejigged entirely into a scheme for purely technical skills acquisition.

In all, when there is an improvement in the economic situation, insecurity is addressed and employment is ensured, the desire to leave in search of greener pastures will reduce and in a matter of years, the japa pandemic will fizzle away.



ENABLING A THRIVING PUBLIC TERTIARY EDUCATION SYSTEM: THE CRITICAL ROLES THAT FEDERAL AND STATE LEGISLATURES MUST PLAY

By Babajide, Michael Olusegun

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INTRODUCTION

This piece focuses on the legislature's role to improve public tertiary education in Nigeria using their constitutional roles of Appropriation, Oversight, and Law-amendment.

As far back as 1985, the National Assembly of Nigeria defined the purpose of higher education in Nigeria under **Section 11 of the Educational (National Minimum Standard and Establishment of Institutions Act (ENMSA) 1985** to cover acquisition, development and inculcation of proper value orientation, intellectual capacity, physical

and intellectual skills, objective view of local and external environment, optimum contributions to national development, promotion of national unity through admission of students and recruitment of staff on a national basis and encouragement for the survival of individuals, society and the environment.

Section 25 of the **ENMSA 1985** defines higher education to mean education which is given at the tertiary stage which covers post-secondary school section of the national education system and which is given at institutions such as universities, polytechnics, colleges of technology, colleges of education, advanced teachers colleges, professional institutions and such other institutions as may be allied to any of the foregoing.

Therefore, a thriving public tertiary education system is a public good that aligns with the aforementioned purpose of higher education and on the condition that Federal and State legislatures play the following critical constitutional roles of appropriation, oversight, and law-making.

THE APPROPRIATION ROLE

Fabunmi (2020) averred, in general terms, that "any nation that fails to invest maximally in education cannot get maximal returns from its investment in education" hence "the development of a country depends on its investment in education" (Fabunmi, 2019). In line with these assertions of Fabunmi (2019) and Fabunmi (2020), it is only prudent that Federal and State legislatures enact Appropriation Acts/Laws that provide adequate funding for public tertiary institutions in Nigeria in exchange for maximal returns like skilled technical employment, economic prosperity, research and human capital development as the ultimate goal.

Sections 59, 80, 81, 100, 120 and 121 of the 1999 Constitution clearly empower the National Assembly and State Houses of Assembly to perform appropriation roles under which the various Appropriation Acts and Laws of the Federation and the 36 States respectively derive their validity and by which the various sectors of the economy, like the education sector, are funded. However, as Fabunmi (2020) noted, "inflation may not enable the increase in budgetary allocations to be meaningful" hence, there is an urgent need to augment sufficient budgetary allocation to fund public tertiary education with a stable economy driven by production over consumption, exportation over importation, political prudence over political prodigality, research and development over mere academic pontifications.

THE OVERSIGHT ROLE

The constitutional bases for the discharge of an oversight role by national and state legislatures are **sections 88 and 89 of the 1999 Constitution** for the National Assembly and **sections 128 and 129 of the 1999 Constitution** for State Assemblies.

By these constitutional provisions, National Assembly and State Assemblies can ascertain the gains and losses of public tertiary education in Nigeria through the investigation of public tertiary institutions that were birthed by Acts of the National Assembly or Laws of State Assemblies with the aim of determining whether to amend the Acts or Laws or to repeal them.

Similarly, with specific reference to the National Assembly, Ahmadu (2022) posited that "oversight is a legislative tool used to evaluate whether certain activities of the Executive branch of government are implemented efficiently and in line with the

intendment of the laws passed by the National Assembly"; a postulation that also applies to State Assemblies.

THE LAW-MAKING ROLE

The Law making role of the legislature is a derivative role from the performance of the oversight functions as discussed above. However, this role only becomes necessary when defects, inadequacies and lacuna have been identified in the Acts and Laws made by the legislatures in question.

According to Adekile (2018), "laws regulating Universities in Nigeria need to be amended in order to attain global best practice towards situating University education and management in Nigeria, in the proper place, within the development process". More specifically, Adekile (2018) avers that "Nigerian public universities lack the freedom to own the management and administration of the model, which is subjected to tyrannical whims of regulatory government bodies..." this is because "looking at the indicators for institutional autonomy and academic freedom ... the legal treatment of institutional autonomy provides a qualified compliance level, but poor in the area of individual rights and freedoms".

Furthermore, there is a need to amend the 1999 Constitution to make public tertiary education an asset that appreciates for the good and prosperity of Nigerians whose access to public tertiary education must be equal, free, and sufficient. This means that **section 18 of the 1999 Constitution** must not continue to be "a human right in sufferance" as observed by Babajide (2022) who posited that "... the Nigerian State has not shown in years that it is aware of the existence of or appreciates the

value of s.18 of its own constitution which it swore to uphold and protect through its machineries of state i.e. the Executive, Legislature, and Judiciary".

Similarly, if the legislature is concerned with enabling a thriving public tertiary education it must amend existing Acts and Laws or enact Acts and Laws to provide for public tertiary education in public tertiary institutions modeled on the public-private partnership proposals of education scholars like Fabunmi (2019) who argue that public-private partnership model (PPPM) "is a veritable tool that could be used to improve economic stability, funding of education, equal access to good quality education; and reduction in the currently high percentage of the school-age population that are out of school. This makes it imperative for governments to use the PPPM for the management of education projects, particularly, those that the governments cannot fund well."

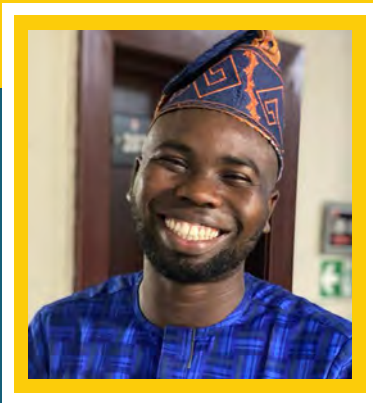
CONCLUSION

Nigeria's National Assembly and the State Houses of Assembly have the capacity to make public tertiary education prosper for the whole of Nigerians if only the legislature play their constitutional roles of Appropriation, Oversight, and Law-amendment with the aim of providing as a public good the highest quality public tertiary education system for the Nigerian Federation.

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COMMODITIZATION OF VOTES: THE CURSE, CAUSE AND CURE

By Akinlade Akinyemi

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Elections and the electioneering process in Nigeria have always been characterized by all forms of undemocratic activities and violence. Notable instances are the Kano riot, the Eastern Regional crisis of 1953, the Action Group crisis of 1962, the Western Nigeria election crisis of 1965, and the annulled June 12, 1993 elections. A critical analysis of these cases exposes a pattern of violence, thuggery, intimidation and various forms of vicious assaults and scheming in our politics.

As time went on, the pattern of elections began to change, especially as democracy returned in 1999. Money, which has always played a prominent role in who wins an election took a different dimension. Though, inducement of party chiefs and other critical stakeholders has always been one of the negative uses of money during elections, giving out money to electorates in exchange of votes which has equally been a usual occurrence has taken on a dangerous dimension, in the name of vote commoditization. Vote buying and selling is described as an act where parties, their agents and voters engage in trading activities as men would buy and sell pepper, but here the trading commodity in this instance are votes. Since it's transactional and money is involved, the highest bidder usually gets the highest votes.

The idea of vote buying and selling to a very large extent reduced the hitherto known menace of election violence. What however many fail to understand is that another cancerous development is fast creeping into our political system. In that it became more 'fashionable' to 'buy' votes and induce voters than to 'arrange' thugs to disrupt elections or snatch the ballot boxes. Our politics moved from frying pan to an 'emerging' fire, one that is fast becoming an inferno. Party agents, who already know registered voters within their wards/ units, go to them and promise them certain amounts of money in exchange for votes. The amount is usually dependent on the neighborhood, that is, the social class in which the electorates belong, and also, what is at stake for the contestants.

This development has badly damaged our system to the point that someone with little idea about governance, a man who is not in the least prepared for an elective position can wake up one day and decide to run for political office just because he has the 'money' to buy his way into power. Sadly, a man that buys his way into power will forever feel he does not owe the people any form of accountability. At least, he 'paid in full' for the votes, and a man can do whatever he likes with whatever he buys with his money. That is how far money has ruined our politics.

There are quite a number of reasons why vote buying is prevalent today. These can be seen both from the angle of the politicians and that of the electorates, since it takes two to tango. If there are no buyers, sellers will have nothing to offer, and vice versa. Past experiences, where office holders failed to fulfill campaign promises have made some voters loose trust in the electoral system. Thus, they

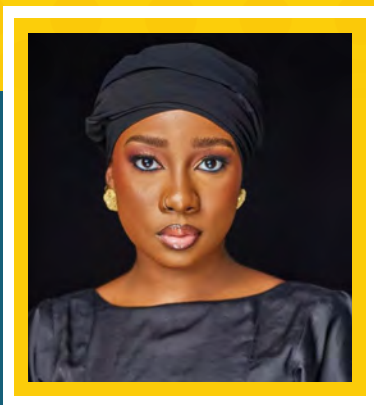
see getting money or any other kind of inducement as their 'only gain' from the government. Greed, illiteracy, ignorance, poverty and negative outlook are some of other reasons people sell their votes. On the other hand, desperation, lack of ideology to run with, capitalizing on the ignorance of the people, and the fact that some politicians see politics as an investment, are some of the reasons people buy votes.

There are two levels of vote buying; the primary election level, also known as delegate level, and the general election level, which is that of the electorates. Strangely, just like common commodities, votes can also be bought in wholesale or retail scale. When politicians and their agents deal with electorates on individual basis, that is retail buying. Wholesale buying is when deals are made on a collective bargain. In some cases, votes can be paid for in advance or even on credit (rarely though).

Putting a stop to this problem might be a difficult one, considering all the approaches involved, but it is not an impossible task. First, political parties should make sure that only candidates with high pedigree are allowed to participate in their primaries. Anyone with a questionable past or an indictment should be screened out. This will send clear signals to stakeholders that dishonest individuals no longer have places in our politics. Again, electoral and related bodies should ensure a ballot system that is secret indeed. Vote buying is an electoral offence; hence, security agents should as well see that anyone caught trading in vote be made to face the full wrath of the law. Civil society organizations, religious organizations, etc. should equally intensify efforts in sensitizing the populace about the dangers of vote buying. Government at

all levels needs to wake up to their responsibilities, efforts should be made to reduce hunger and poverty, which are major factors that promote vote commoditization. Lastly, this menace should not

only be seen as a threat to our democracy, equally it should be handled as a national emergency, and all hands must be on deck to put an end to it.



A SEAT AT THE TABLE: MY EXPERIENCE AS PLAC'S INTERN AND THE LESSONS LEARNED ABOUT ADVOCATING FOR NORTHERN NIGERIAN WOMEN'S REPRESENTATION IN POLITICS

By Amrah Aliyu

Activist and Team Lead, Salma Attah foundation for women and girls support SAFWGS

Women's representation in leadership and political positions remains a persistent issue, both globally and in Nigeria. In Northern Nigeria, this issue is particularly challenging, as cultural norms and beliefs often serve as significant barriers to women seeking elected office. Despite the challenges, Northern Nigerian women have been making strides toward greater representation in the National Assembly.

According to a recent report, only 7.5% of the members of the National Assembly are women. This is a discouraging statistic, especially considering that Nigeria is home to some of the world's most dynamic and politically active women.

In Northern Nigeria, this number is even lower, with only a handful of women elected to the National Assembly in the last decade.

One of the reasons for this disparity is the cultural norms and beliefs that limit women's participation in politics. Women are often viewed as second-class citizens, with their primary role being that of caretakers and homemakers. As a result, women face significant hurdles in getting elected to public office, including financial barriers, cultural stigmas, and gender-based violence.

Despite these challenges, there have been some notable women who have broken barriers and held leadership positions in Nigerian politics. For instance, Barmani Choge, a Hausa musician born in Katsina in the 1940s used her craft to speak out against social and political injustices, the core message of her song was that women should get up and shine in a male-dominated world. Queen Amina of Zazzau was a warrior queen who ruled over the city-state of Zazzau (now known as Zaria) in the late 16th century. She led her armies into battle and expanded her kingdom's territory, making her one of the most powerful rulers in the region. Other notable mentions are, Ladi Kwali, a renowned potter whose work is celebrated around the world, Gambo Sawaba, the political activist who fought for women's rights and democracy, Laila Dogon Yaro, the first female permanent secretary in Northern Nigeria, and Nana Asma'u, the scholar and teacher who championed education for women. These women along with many others were pioneers, breaking barriers and paving the way for future generations of women to follow in their footsteps. Yet, despite their achievements, the struggle for gender equality in Nigeria's political landscape continues.

In contemporary Nigerian politics, there have been women who have contested for political office. In the 2023 elections, several women ran for office, including Hajiya Khadija Iya, who contested for the gubernatorial seat in Niger State, and Senator Aisha Binani, who ran for the gubernatorial seat in

Adamawa State. Other notable examples include politician and activist, Munira Tanimu Suleiman and Senator Binta Masi Garba, who was the only female senator from Northern Nigeria in the 8th Senate. Senator Garba from Adamawa State has been a vocal advocate for women's rights and empowerment and has championed legislation that sought to address issues such as gender-based violence and child marriage.

However, some cultural norms dictate that women should not be seen in public and should not participate in political activities. This belief system is a significant barrier to women seeking political representation. Furthermore, the financial cost of running for office is often prohibitively high, with campaign costs that are beyond the means of many women. Additionally, women who run for office often face harassment and violence, which can deter them from pursuing political office.

There needs to be concerted efforts in ensuring that women from Northern Nigeria, who are often underrepresented in national discourse, are given a voice in the political process; when we attend international events or conferences, it is disappointing to see that Northern Nigerian women are rarely represented in discussions on politics and leadership. This is a missed opportunity, as Northern Nigerian women have a unique perspective and valuable insights to offer on issues ranging from education to healthcare and security.

As a young woman from Northern Nigeria, I have always been passionate about the role of women in politics and leadership positions. Unfortunately, the reality is that women, especially from the northern region, are still grossly underrepresented in these areas. I recall the first time I spoke out about running for a position, my aunt cautioned me and said I might never find a man to settle with.

This statement underscores the deeply ingrained cultural beliefs that still hold women back from pursuing their dreams and ambitions and this kind of mentality is prevalent in Northern Nigeria, where women are often viewed as liabilities and not assets in the society.

As I continued to learn and grow, I became inspired by the stories of trailblazing women like Dr. Mairo Mandara, a public health specialist and the first country Representative of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation to Nigeria. A. During a speech, she shared that if she let herself fail, many girls in Borno State would not go to school, but if she succeeded, they would. This statement really resonated with me and solidified my belief that women have a responsibility to pave the way for others and be role models for the next generation.

In the history of Nigeria, there has never been a time where a woman carried the title "Madam Speaker". Within my short time at the National Assembly, I was privileged to observe plenaries and budget defense and every time I am in a room of deliberation and a woman speaks, she introduces herself as the first and only woman representing her constituency. Initially, I was excited to witness this, but while this may seem like a milestone, it is important to recognize that it should be a right, not a privilege.

Following the 2019 elections, only 4 out of 109 senators were women, and out of 360 members of the House of Representatives, only 13 were women. This underrepresentation is even more pronounced in the Northern region of Nigeria, where cultural and religious beliefs often serve as a barrier to women's participation in politics. As I reflect on this experience, I am reminded of the challenges that women often face in politics and leadership positions, especially in Northern Nigeria. It is disheartening to see the small number

of women in legislative positions and the limited opportunities available for women to participate fully in decision-making processes.

This gender imbalance in politics is not unique to Nigeria, but it is a problem that must be addressed if we are to achieve true equality and inclusivity. Women bring unique perspectives and experiences to the table, and their voices must be heard in the decision-making process. It is essential that political parties provide greater support to women candidates, including funding and mentorship opportunities, and that cultural beliefs that limit women's participation in politics are challenged.

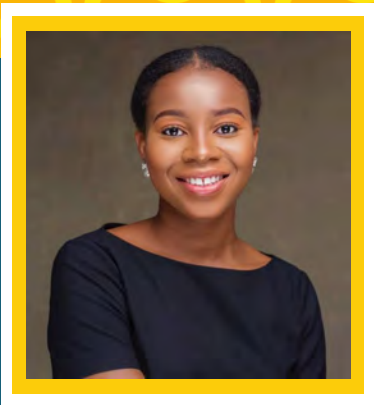
In recent years, I am also encouraged by the bravery and determination of women who have contested for political positions in Northern Nigeria. Although some of them did not win, their efforts and courage have paved the way for future generations of women.

Despite the obstacles, these women persisted in their aspirations, driven by the desire to effect positive change in their communities and pave the way for future generations of women to take on leadership positions hence we must continue to build the capacity of women to ensure that their voices are heard in the decision-making process. Organizations such as the one I lead, the Salma Attah Foundation for Women and Girls Support (SAFWGS) have launched campaigns to build the capacity of young girls and encourage them to get involved in policies that address women's rights and empowerment.

It is high time that we recognize the importance of having women in leadership positions and work towards creating an environment that supports and encourages women's participation in politics. We must challenge cultural and religious beliefs

that limit women's aspirations and educate our communities on the importance of gender equality. By doing so, we can create a Nigeria where women have equal opportunities to lead and make positive changes in their communities.

As I continue on my journey, I hope to be a part of this change and inspire other women to strive for greatness.



REDEFINING THE IDEAL NIGERIAN

By Kosisochukwu Ifunanya Umeh

Programme Assistant, Policy and Legal Advocacy Centre PLAC

The average Nigerian is fed up with the present state of affairs — corruption, human rights violation, political upheavals and economic downturns, to mention a few. On Thursday, 4th May 2023, one Google search for “Corruption in Nigeria” produced about 60,900,000 results in 0.53 seconds. These staggering figures leave one wondering what more could be written or researched about that has not been addressed by a paper. Largely, none.

The volume of research on these issues is proof that we are not bereft of knowledge. In fact, as far back as the beginning of the 21st century, issues relating to women were being canvassed as an integral part of contemporary discourse on development and democratization worldwide.¹ To discover the roots of corruption, researchers have gone as far as drawing a causal connection between colonialism and political corruption.² Hence, the need is not knowledge, but that solutions proffered over the years be implemented.

The seeming recycling of events only complements the quote that “those who do not heed history are doomed to repeat it”.³ It is uncertain what cycle is being repeated, but the current situation in the country has led many to demand an overhaul. Many have taken to

1 Olufemi, F.J., 'Women & National Development' [2006] Vol. 6, No. 4, *The Constitution*, p. 34

2 Bönner, A., 'Nigeria - An Archaeology of Political Corruption' [2020] *Berliner Wissenschafts-Verlag*

3 Siollun, M., 'Oil, Politics and Violence' [2009] *Algora Publishing, New York*, p. 217

Chief Bola Ige's Siddon Look style (a catchphrase that means to remain passive)⁴ as more political drama unfolds.

Noting the current predicament, a retired Nigerian judge expressed himself thus: *"Everything in Nigeria has changed. We have lost the golden era. We now have a Nigeria where we have all lost our capacity to be outraged by anything"*.⁵ However, he connects the present reality to the culpability of many Nigerians for corruption. Quoting a Kenyan who was reported to have lived in Nigeria for 12 years, he says:

*"You see, the problem with Nigeria is not just the corruption but the thinking. The average Nigerian does not think. They have all the degrees in the world and hold fancy positions, but they do not think, so they don't know how their corrupt actions affect others and the country... Corruption is a fundamental human right here. It is the way of life. You people don't even bother to know how it has put you in the situation you are all complaining about. You don't know how it affects you. All you do as though it is second nature is corrupt yourself and others, while ignoring and denigrating anything that was put in place to make your country function"*⁶.

While this statement is largely true, there's a need for the emerging crop of young Nigerians to redefine their identity as Nigerians. Beyond the present reality, this crop would dare to stand for something noble, and not be swayed by anything.

⁴ [Shaking Off "Siddon Look". By Jide Omotinugbon - Premium Times Opinion \(premiumtimesng.com\)](https://www.premiumtimesng.com) accessed May 15, 2023

⁵ Emiaso, M., 'Perceived Corrupt, Memoirs of a Nigerian Judge, [2022], p. 47

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 2

A Spoken Word Poetry: What Does it Mean to be Nigerian?

*Being Nigerian is much more than being a national
It's rather, I believe, the deep-seated feeling of
patriotism*

*A burning passion that won't just dissipate in the face
of adversity*

*The one that says we can build the old waste places
even when the future seems bleak*

*On the contrary, it's not about doing so much
I believe a Nigerian would cause change to erupt in
their little spaces of influence*

*To me, being Nigerian is the promotion of human
ingenuity*

*I believe it's a spirit devoid of national hypocrisy —
I don't want to flagrantly abuse and penetrate
systems, give bribes in cash or kind to get things to
work for me, yet call out the government with a shrug
saying, "The system is bad"*

*"It's Nigeria, we have to do something to get
something".*

But I dare to believe that that's not the ideal Nigerian

The Nigerians of the 60s defied the odds

*They were faced with the ruthlessness of power-
hungry oligarchs,*

yet insisted on doing better than joining them

"You no go like chop your own national cake?"

*A lot of us can relate to being cajoled with this
question*

*An ideal Nigerian will say "I no go chop national Moi
Moi to the detriment of my children's future" because
they understand what's important.*

My beliefs may be many

*Yet I still believe that being Nigerian is to look beyond
meat and drinks,*

*beyond the conditions of the country to the conditions
of the people*

The country is structure, but democracy calls the people the government

Being Nigerian is to be the best you can be in your little sphere and watch it create a ripple effect until it reaches the ends of the earth.

Baby steps, they say, soon become giant strides.

To be Nigerian is to be a voice — shrill, not wavering, firm in justice, and relentless in productivity.

To be Nigerian is to strike the ground again and yet again.

Are you an Ideal Nigerian?



WHY CURRENT APPROACH WON'T ADDRESS THE GLOBAL EDUCATION CRISIS

By Mohammad Sabo Keana

Team Lead, Almajiri Child Rights Initiative

In September 2022, I attended the UN General Assembly's (UNGA) Transforming Education Summit as a partner of Street Child, where I spoke at a high-level panel on the global out of school crisis and need to include local NGOs, both at major events like UNGA and within development and humanitarian decision-making structures more broadly.

It was fantastic to be at the summit, and it was positive to hear discussions on the global education crisis and need for commitment to education for all. However, it was clear to me that even though policymakers, ministers, influencers, etc., talk about education for all children, they are only focusing on the most visible groups. I represent Almajiri* children, one of the largest groups of out-of-school children in the world spanning multiple West African countries like Nigeria, Mali and Senegal – yet there was no mention of them at all as a group in need of support.

It is estimated that there are between 7 million (Anti-Slavery International) and 10.5 million (UNICEF) Almajiri children in Nigeria. That's an enormous number, and they are a group of children who, without change, will genuinely never have access to education at all. Yet, they are never spotlighted for funding or any other support. I believe there are two reasons for this.

Firstly, there are other more visible causes being supported. At the Summit, I heard various officials talk about getting Ukrainian refugees and Afghan girls back to school. Obviously, these are important groups, and all issues affecting education are essential, but the numbers missing out on education in Nigeria because of the Almajiri system are far greater. If the international response were rational and truly based on need, I would expect to see greater attention to the Almajiri phenomenon alongside support for these other groups. Unfortunately, funding seems to be allocated in direct proportion to how widely publicized the issue is, rather than its scale and severity.

Educating Almajiri children is a vital step to delivering peace, security, and sustainable development in northern Nigeria, and if we really want to achieve Sustainable Development Goal 4 – quality education for all children – by 2030, we must pay more attention and commit more to addressing the less publicized education crises, such as the millions of Almajiri children in Nigeria and other underrepresented groups.

Secondly, no one is asking us – local NGOs who do the work and exist on the front line – what we think. If organizations like mine – the Almajiri Child Rights Initiative – had a voice at platforms like UNGA, the

conversations and commitments would be very different, but Street Child's four partners were among very few local, frontline organizations at UNGA. How can donors and INGOs apply the principle of effective altruism to address the global education crisis without including those of us with first-hand knowledge in the conversation?

In his excellent book "Doing Good Better" philosopher William MacAskill says that "There is a vast difference between 'good' and 'best' use of money", and advises us to ask three questions before prioritizing a cause to support:

First, 'scale', What is the magnitude of the problem?

Second, 'neglection', How many resources are already being allocated to tackling this problem?

Third, 'tractability', How easy is it to make progress on this problem, and how easy is it to tell if you're making progress?

I believe that it is impossible to answer all of these questions from the outside.

In addition, local organizations need the support of the global community. We can identify national issues affecting children's education that governments are unable or unwilling to address, as well as challenges and potential solutions, but we need help to amplify these issues and to make the case as a global community on a global platform like UNGA, that the system needs to change. My organization has made some progress over the past few years and had some high-end conversations with policymakers in Nigeria. But the out-of-school crisis in Nigeria runs into the millions, and "small is beautiful" approaches just

don't work. The only truly effective solution will be to raise the government's level of agency and willingness to change the system. This will require constant pressure on the government from the international community, as well as financial support and assistance in developing frameworks that lead to effective implementation and use of funds.

It is crucial that organizations like mine have a presence at conferences like UNGA, to raise awareness of invisible, under-publicized challenges like this at a global level. On Street Child's panel with me at UNGA were a number of other incredible local organizations, all of whom have the expertise, knowledge, community trust and capacity to address these challenges – but not the funding or influence.

I call on UNGA, other global platforms like it, international leaders and international funders, to do more to decolonize aid. There is an international movement to shift power to local organizations, but small local organizations like mine still face severe structural barriers to accessing funds compared with bigger local organizations that have long-term relationships with INGOs. I enjoin stakeholders not to assume that smaller local organizations lack the capacity or expertise to deliver at scale, that we can't manage money, that we can't be trusted. We have strong financial accountability systems; that's why INGOs like Street Child work with us. Next year, we hope to see a sponsorship program, financing attendance for local organizations that will help us to build relationships and visibility, but

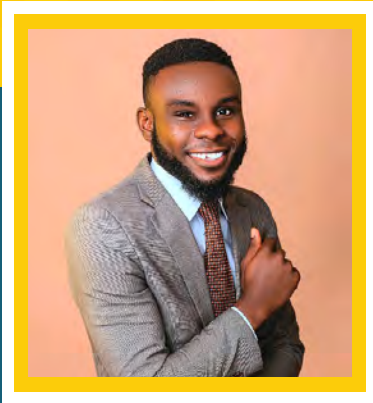
most importantly that will help stakeholders to better understand the issues on the ground.

'Let's make this change right now.'

* About Almajiri children

Almajiri' refers to persons who migrate to learn or propagate Islamic knowledge. The Almajiri system has been in existence for 300–400 years, and it is traditional in Nigeria, particularly in the northern part of the country, for families to send their young sons (Almajiri) and daughters (Almajira) to boarding schools in urban centers to acquire Qur'anic education under the supervision of religious scholars known as 'Mallams'. While initially a way of ensuring that low-income children could access education, the system has evolved and changed, and young adults are now leaving the Almajiri system with no formal education or skills.

Sent away from their homes to these schools, Almajiri children become disconnected from their families and often end up street-connected, begging for food to sustain themselves, or engaging in child labor. These children, who already come from Nigeria's poorest families, are exposed to violence and exploitation, and most lack access to health, education, nutrition, and protection. Without vital literacy or numeracy, it is almost impossible for them to find employment or a means of supporting themselves in adulthood, and they are consequently susceptible to being recruited into armed groups by actors who prey upon their vulnerabilities.



ON HEALTH: THE ROLE OF MEN IN FAMILY PLANNING.

By Shedrack Nwaokocha.

Research Assistant, Nigerian Mental Health (NMH) and Founder, The Empowered Youth Africa

“Most Women in The Room Didn’t Accept That Their Partners Should Have a Vasectomy”

I attended the Family planning and private sector engagement summit/ innovation spotlight. An event organized by the Nigeria Federal Ministry of Health and Social Welfare. This was targeted at accelerating the impact of Family planning interventions in Nigeria.

The event witnessed several keynote speakers who spoke to the barriers of effective family planning interventions, and highlighting the barriers which included, personal beliefs, fear, literacy levels, and awareness of the availability of family planning interventions especially in the rural communities. There were also cases of cultural and religious limitations that are against some family planning techniques.

This article seeks to give insight to the lack of involvement from males in sexual reproductive health (SRH) issues.

Family planning interventions were not just for married couples but are essential also for youths. However, the major barrier for youths and young couples remain the stigma they get from society while trying to access these interventions.

Provoking statements like: “why should you be using contraceptives at this age? or “It is a sin to prevent what God naturally meant to occur” are common instances of stigmatization on people who try to access contraceptives or involve in family planning techniques.

However, the advent of technology has been useful in reducing the influence of the middle man, thus creating direct access to health professionals and medications, without physically going to the facilities. This in turn creates a discrete process to reduce stigma.

Asides the health implications of ignored family planning techniques to all (father, mother, child and society), Nigeria's extreme population has a direct effect on her economy. High infant and maternal mortality rates also pose a problem. Therefore, an investment in women's health and family planning is an investment in life planning and equals to economic growth.

Reflecting on all this, to curb the high risk of infant and maternal mortality in Nigeria, and reduce the menace of high population index, more efforts

should be channeled to grass root sensitization. (rural women and their husband or partners) This is because most recorded resistance comes from persons in this sample size.

In addition, major stakeholders like imams, pastors and traditional leaders, who have huge influence on people should also be engaged to enlighten their members, eliminating the cultural and religious factors to this issue.

Furthermore, male partners should be allowed to champion this movement. This is because most of the available interventions are for women, while men who are on the sidelines are actually key players in sexual and reproductive health. It is imperative that they should also be involved.

The highlight of this is that, the burden of family planning has always been shouldered by women who seem to have several contraceptive options.

“It is recommended that men be encouraged to undergo vasectomy.”

Vasectomy is the surgical cutting off of the supply of sperm from the male testicles thereby preventing pregnancy during intercourse. Closing the tubes means that there is no sperm to fertilize the woman's egg during sex. The tubes normally deliver sperm into and from a man's penis when he ejaculates, so preventing this process is a highly effective contraceptive method. While this is a permanent and irreversible process, it does not affect the ability to have an orgasm or sex drive.

However, when a poll of consent was taken, **most women in the room preferred to bear the burden of contraception methods and family**

planning rather than let their partners undergo a vasectomy.

This shows that the acceptability of vasectomy in many sub-Saharan African countries, where patriarchal norms are prevalent will still be low.

While some argued about the problem; If they decided later to marry new wives, a common practice in Africa, others, believed that only women should be involved in the process. It was generally observed that most persons (men and women included) still prefer the regular safety measures other than any permanent procedure, regardless of variation in education, age and marital status. In the words of one:

“***This is killing; this is one way of killing a man. If I am no longer able to have children when God did not stop me, is actually like killing me.***”

In other to enhance male participation in family planning and address their role in SRH, there is a need for focused health services specifically for males to discuss their fears and debunk any myth they may have. Training of male professionals to render these services is advisable while regular campaigns and enlightenment programs similar to those conducted for females should also be encouraged.

#Health #Nigeria #familyplanning #SRHR #wellness #economy

WORD SEARCH ON LEGISLATIVE TERMS

S	E	C	O	N	D	R	E	A	D	I	N	G	O	L	K	F	L	U	K	A
T	R	A	S	P	O	N	S	O	R	T	O	Y	S	V	O	T	E	N	P	P
A	E	U	O	D	L	Y	F	R	E	F	E	R	R	A	L	N	A	I	T	P
T	S	C	H	R	F	E	C	T	E	N	Q	A	B	K		S	D	C	M	R
U	E	U	N	I	D	R	E	S	O	L	U	T	I	O	N	L	D	A	H	O
T	I	S	T	O	P	E	T	I	T	I	O	N	C	L	I	G	E	M	I	P
E	N	A	C	T	A	C	R	U	S	H	R	I	A	E	T	L	B	E	D	R
A	R	B	C	H	E	E	M	P	A	Q	U	O	M	G	S	E	A	R	C	I
I	M	F	A	E	M	S	J	N	A	Y	M	U	E	I	P	L	T	A	H	A
O	L	I	L	O	L	S	H	E	C	P	E	S	R	S	F	L	E	L	O	T
P	A	R	L	I	A	M	E	N	T	V	E	C	A	V	L	E	G	I	S	I
A	K	S	E	D	N	O	R	S	E	R	T	R	L	H	O	R	U	M	T	O
S	K	T	G	D	R	T	S	E	S	S	I	O	N	E	O	Y	I	J	A	N
S	L	R	I	R	O	I	E	V	B	I	C	A	R	O	R	P	H	E	T	T
E	A	E	S	E	C	O	M	M	I	T	T	E	E	E	H	K		Y	E	V
A	N	A	L	M	H	N	A	T	L	G	O	N	L	I	O	H	O	U	S	E
H	M	D	A	R	A	D	I	L	L	C	B	L	G	G	U	B	V	T	M	T
E	E	I	T	A	M	T	V	S	E	I	A	M	E	N	D	N	E	N	T	O
A	E	N	O	N	B	P	L	T	D	G	O	N	T	D	N	I	R	O	U	O
R	N	G	R	E	E	U	A	E	L	M	A	O	H	T	P	A	S	S	E	D
I	A	M	M	O	R	N	H	R	E	P	E	A	L	F	N	A	I	C	M	O
N	E	S	W	N	E	Y	U	A	M	E	D	N	M	O	T	I	G	O	N	M
G	C	O	N	S	T	I	T	U	T	I	O	N	C	Y	R	U	H	F	U	A
P	R	E	S	I	D	E	N	T	I	A	L	A	S	S	E	N	T	Y	U	Q

CLUES

House	Amendment	Chamber	Order Paper	Ratify
Senate	Enact	Bicameral	Committee	Referral
Statute	Passed	Caucus	Bill	Legislator
Recess	Repeal	Appropriation	First Reading	Nay
Quorum	Session	Oversight	Act	Second Reading
Floor	Sponsor	Hearing	Motion	Lead Debate
Vote	Unicameral	Clerk	Assent	Petition
Gallery	Veto	Constitution	Parliament	Resolution

Words may be found vertically, horizontally and diagonally.

PHOTOS FROM MAIDEN ALUMNI CONVENING 2022







ABOUT PLAC

Policy and Legal Advocacy Centre (PLAC) is a non-governmental organization committed to strengthening democratic governance and citizens' participation in Nigeria. PLAC works to enhance citizens' engagement with state institutions, and to promote transparency and accountability in policy and decision-making process.

The main focus of PLAC's intervention in the democratic governance process is on building the capacity of the legislature and reforming the electoral process. Since its establishment, PLAC has grown into a leading institution with capacity to deliver cutting-edge research, policy analysis and advocacy. PLAC receives funding support from donors and other philanthropic sources.

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